31 May 1982

Dear Harold and Lil:

Not much to tell you in the way of news, but I want to thank you for your good letter of the 17th. I hope your affidavit chores have eased off a bit by now, for both your sakes.

I last saw the eye surgeon two weeks ago. He said come back in three months, and in the meantime see the optometrist in mid-June for possible correction of the glasses lens for the left eye (which was the one operated on.) Pressure contlnues normal in that eye, and, with the help of a mild medication, in the right eye too. Vision in the left eye is very nearly normal, so I seem to be doing okay.

Late in March the winter wet season wound up with a windstorm in the midst of an extended downpour of rain, and I had four bay trees blown down and a black acacia uprooted, all falling downhill and away from the house. I hired some kids to chainsaw them into firewood and drag the brush down the hill and into a gully. This exposed an area as big as a couple of tennis courts where I had not been able to keep smaller brush under control since before Jenifer became ill in 1976, so the past few weeks I've been cleaning it out -- digging out tangles of blackberries, poison oak, chaparral, wild plum sprouts, anise and giant weeds and dragging or rolling it all down into the same gully. The place looks much more open and spacious from the deck, and I'm glad to have it cleared away because of the fire hazard during the dry season. A young fawn uses it to do the equivalent of his jogging while his mother looks on, and there are three pair of quail who parade across it regularly every day on their foraging rounds. And the usual array of noisy bluejays scolding the occasional cat that wanders through.

No, I have heard nothing from Hal Verb since about the time I retired nearly 10 years ago. I'm not sure quite why, but assume it was a combination of my retiring from active news work and his being involved at the time with job troubles and an assortment of other people of whom I knew little. I remember Kaffke, although I never met him. I think Hal had him figured as a plant, as I certainly did. We were content that Hal dropped away, as he was a puzzling combination of dogged worker with considerable insight and yet a childlike willingness to trust almost anyone, such as Christian. We liked Hal, and he worked well with us, but we never felt certain of his discretion.

You mentioned the mallards who have taken over your swimming pool. Reminds me of the pair of mallards who were running Marin Genral Hospital during Jenifer's stays there. They would fly up from the nearby estuary and sit sedately on the lawn for hours at a time. One night when I went down tothe basement cafeteria for some dinner the kitchen door was open, and there on the floor just inside the back door were the drake and hen, sitting comfortably on the linoleum, waiting for a handout. People working all around them, no problems.

Interesting about the Reader's Digest decision todo the book on the unanswered questions. Hope your interview with their write turned out well.

Glad to hear you're both well and okay, and let's hope the summer will be gentler than usual.

All the best,

jdw